

**REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 21, 2011**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Monday, March 21, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann.

Present: Board of Education members: John Cascio, Gina DeAngelo, Stacey Hodges, Mary Beth Maluccio, Penny Stanziale, Martin Walsh, Vice Chair Maria Tougas and Chairperson Raul Rodriguez.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager; Interim Superintendent of Schools Thomas McDowell, Ed.D. Michael Emmett, Tim Howes, Sally Dastoli, Keith Rafaniello, Fred Bushey and Principals: Moore, Cook, Catarius, Zacchei, Harvey Wilkie and Guari as well as other assistants and staff.

Councilor Hurley led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

PRESENTATION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION 2011-2012 BUDGET

Interim Superintendent Thomas McDowell presented a power point presentation of the Wethersfield Board of Education Proposed Budget.

Councilor Drake inquired as to the MBR ("Minimum Budget Requirement") number and asked whether the Board of Education needed to received, by law, a 2.34% increase.

Thomas McDowell explained that the Governor has proposed an MBR number which would give the Board of Education a 2.34% increase, but at the same point in time, there have been other discussion/bills at the State and it is unclear what is going to happen to the MBR. He noted the Governor supports MBR and the Governor is supporting the 2.34% increase, but that is proposed at the legislator.

Councilor Drake asked if this is a number that needs to be paid attention to.

Thomas McDowell responded that he feels there is going to be some type of MBR number, but he just doesn't know what it is going to be.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he had a conversation with Mark Stange at the State Board of Education and the MBR numbers that he received from Mark Stange was roughly \$2.5 million less than what Thomas McDowell is presenting. Deputy Mayor Console also stated that he was told by Mr. Stange that the State was not going to use the MBR number this year because of the level of funding with the ECS grants which are estimated, with the way the Obama stimulus worked last year and the ARRA [American Recovery & Reinvestment Act] of last year that they

cannot get a good calculation. He also stated that the MBR is somewhere between the 2008-2009 Board of Education budget.

Thomas McDowell responded that there are a lot of numbers out there but this is not his understanding. He noted that Governor Rell had a huge hole to fill with ECS "Education Cost Share" and what she did to hold the towns harmless on ECS, she included the borrowed money as ECS money and Connecticut was really one of the only States to do that. He noted that they are calculating that the MBR number to be \$1.143 million and that's at 2.34%, so he didn't understand where Deputy Mayor Console got \$2.5 million.

Deputy Mayor Console replied that the number is ongoing from Mr. Stange. He noted that he is going to speak again with Mr. Stange and make sure his numbers are correct and he will share his numbers with the Town Manager. He also recommended that Thomas McDowell also speak with Mr. Stange because what he told him, the Board of Education is way off in their numbers.

Thomas McDowell commented that the number Deputy Mayor Console is using is coming from the 2008-2009 appropriation.

Deputy Mayor Console responded that it was his understanding that was the number he should be using.

Thomas McDowell responded that they had spoken with Mr. Stange earlier this afternoon and that's not what he told them.

Deputy Mayor Console responded that he spoke with Mr. Stange at 2:00 p.m.

Thomas McDowell commented that the MBR number of 2.34% is the number that goes along with the Governor's recommendation and where that ends up at the end of the day, no one knows.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that he will clarify the numbers with Mr. Stange tomorrow. He also noted that he had given a copy of the Board of Education's budget when it was at 8.84% to the Town Manager and noted that he had a lot of questions about it, and forwarded a copy to Thomas McDowell for his review of his many questions. Deputy Mayor Console also commented on the number of teacher layoffs and asked if it included any administrative staff or just teacher layoffs and/or will it be a blend along with some of the programs.

Thomas McDowell responded that they would be looking at all programs, custodians, secretaries, everyone. He noted that by law he has to notice teachers and because of the uncertainty of the budget, he has noticed 47 non-tenured teachers. He noted that last year they had noticed nine teachers.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the Charter has a specific description of how the budget is to be presented to the Council and it is supposed to include the actual expenditures for the 2009-

2010 fiscal year, and the estimated expenditures for current fiscal year and asked if the Council would be receiving that.

Thomas McDowell responded that the Council will be getting a copy of the Board of Education expenditures through the end of February and once the report is approved at the Board of Education meeting scheduled for March 22, it will be forwarded to the Council.

Councilor Kotkin asked when the actual figures from the last fiscal year will be available.

Thomas McDowell responded that the actual figures are in budget.

Councilor Kotkin noted that the actual figures given to Council is from the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

Thomas McDowell asked if he wanted the actual numbers from 2009-2010.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the Board is supposed to get the actual number from 2009-2010, the most recently completed fiscal year so that the Council, when judging the budget, can compare the proposed budget with what was actually spent and your estimated expenditures, not the originally budget from last year. Councilor Kotkin also asked if the Board of Education is in the midst of negotiation contracts.

Thomas McDowell responded that this was correct.

Councilor Kotkin noted that he believes the Board of Education, like the Town, is in the midst of negotiating labor contracts, and he inquired as to what is built into this budget for the outcome of the labor contracts.

Thomas McDowell responded that he did not want to discuss it. He explained that if he reveals what is built into the contract by letting the Council know the percentage included he would let the cat out of the bag. Negotiations are done in executive sessions.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the cat is out of the bag on the Town's side, it is public as to what is built into the budget, but it doesn't necessarily mean that where something will end up at, so somehow when the Council sets the Board of Education's budget they are going to have to do it based upon what their contract ends up and the Town has until May 15.

Thomas McDowell responded that he would be happy to let the Town Manager know what the number is and he can let the Council know. He stated that he doesn't want to have to negotiate when the numbers are made public.

Councilor Kotkin commented that he thinks that it is important.

Thomas McDowell said he would be happy to let Jeff Bridges know the information.

Councilor Kotkin inquired as to heat energy, and he asked the Town Manager what is built into the Town's budget for decline in the cost of natural gas in the next fiscal year.

Jeff Bridges responded that it is 20%.

Councilor Kotkin noted that the Board of Education has reflected a 3% decrease in the cost of natural gas, and he noted that had hoped that both the Town and the Board of Education could have the same number for the Town buildings and the school buildings.

Thomas McDowell responded that he had asked that question also and it was brought to his attention that the Board of Education uses their buildings a whole lot more than the Town uses its buildings. He noted that unfortunately the school buildings are not as efficient. He stated that he could put any number that the Town wants him to be in the budget.

Councilor Kotkin noted that he is asking for what Thomas McDowell feels is accurate, and the reason the Town's numbers are down 20% is because the cost of natural gas has been declining in the Northeast for the last four years and it's because that unit price is down 20%, not because there is a increase in efficiency. He stated if Thomas McDowell was expecting the school buildings to be less efficient this year than last year, then the same number should be reflected.

Thomas McDowell responded because of all the snow on the roofs, they were running their buildings even after the kids left school. In addition, they needed to take out tiles and increase the heat to 82 degrees in order for the heat to go up. He noted that he has been informed that the number they are using is a good number. He also noted that they can take another look at that number but he doesn't know how they can get down to 3 percent from 20 percent.

Councilor Kotkin commented that perhaps Thomas McDowell can see what estimates are available. He noted that his confusion is that the Town and the Board of Education is buying off the same contract and most towns in the capitol region are buying off the same contract, and the gas contracts tend to be purchased as a whole a year and-a-half in advance so the higher price contract rolls off when a lower price contract comes in. He noted that differences have been seen in the last couple or three or four budgets where there are differences in electricity and gas. He noted that electricity prices tend to stay the same, but gas prices have been lower.

Thomas McDowell commented that they will take a look at that and trim it back and see what they are using and get back with the Council.

Councilor Kotkin commented that there is one item under the heating/energy about replacing the boiler at the high school, which is probably the least efficient schools in the district and asked if that was expected to be done by the next heating season and are any savings recognized in the budget.

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Thomas McDowell responded that the entire boiler is not being replaced, only a section of the boiler.

Councilor Kotkin noted that there was not a separate line item for consumable and textbooks they were not a separate line item. He then thanked Thomas McDowell and his staff for the detail on the budget and explained that it is the clearest it has been in the six years he has been on the Council. He asked where the consumables were located in previous budgets.

Thomas McDowell responded that they didn't want to show a negative on any line item. If there was \$50,000 on a line item, they would reflect that it was depleted to zero percent when in reality they may have spent \$75,000. He explained that one of things that he and Mr. Howes had talked about, in order to trend things out properly, if they have \$75,000 and they allocate \$50,000, he wants to see \$75,000 so the next year when they budget, they can see what they need to budget. He explained that consumables have been purchased in this district forever, but they never were as a line item in the budget, so they broke it out so they could keep track of the consumables because they are bought every year.

Councilor Kotkin commented that he thinks there is a lot of initiatives in the budget for technology which will improve the operation and efficiency of the schools and get the schools to another plane. He suggested that it would be helpful to know how the different pieces interrelate to show what the schools are doing now and how that will save the schools from doing less in the future. He noted that he is having difficulty seeing where initiatives are going to be saving money down the road.

Thomas McDowell responded that most of the technology initiatives in the amount of \$457,000 have been taken out from what Council is reviewing tonight. There are technology initiatives that are related to Power School. They have been using I PASS for the past 10 years and it is an antiquated system that does not do what they need it to. He explained that more than 100 districts in Connecticut are using Power School, which is interactive and allows parents to receive instant information regarding their student's schedules, grades, teachers' comments. It is one of things that the Board of Education would like to use. He noted that the cost of the Power School is \$57,000.

Councilor Kotkin commented that the proposed budget at 6% includes not replacing 5 retirement positions which would bring the budget down to 5 ³/₄%, and asked if the Board of Education was already aware of those retirements.

Thomas McDowell responded that there are a couple scenarios. In one of the scenarios, the savings are taken from the teacher at the top of the scale and use \$364,000 as a savings. He noted that before they would not lay off anyone, and the easiest thing is to not pay workers' compensation, is to not to replace those positions.

Councilor Kotkin commented that it is really going from someone at the high end to someone at the low end.

Thomas McDowell stated that it is taking someone who makes \$88,000 and someone who is making \$44,000.

Councilor Kotkin asked if that's how they are getting down to the 6%.

Thomas McDowell responded that this was correct.

Councilor Kotkin stated that to get down to the 5 ¾%, now they are hiring people at \$44,000.

Thomas McDowell responded that this was correct.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this was all the retirements in the school system.

Thomas McDowell responded that to date, they have been told of six retirements, but there could be some more.

Councilor Manousos inquired as to Slide 53, and asked if the Board of Education went through the process of what would need to get done to get to a zero percent budget and asked if the budget they have presented shows what would be eliminated first, or is it to show the Council what the impact would be

Thomas McDowell responded that he would have to go back to the Board and everything would need to be on the table, and we wouldn't just be cutting teachers.

Councilor Manousos asked if they wanted to get below 6%, where would they make the cuts. It was his understanding the the Board of Education does not want to cut all these teachers' positions to get to 6%.

Thomas McDowell explained that by Connecticut State Statutes, they need to notice teachers by April 1. If they do not notice the teachers, then they own the teachers for the next year. He explained further that the easiest thing to do and the safest thing to do when the budget is uncertain, they notice the non tenured teachers. He noted that it is an awful thing to do and noted that by Friday, they noticed 47 teachers. Some of the teachers thanked him because they didn't know what else to say, and others imploded. It commented that if in fact they needed to make a cut, he would have to go back to the Board of Education and everything would be on the table. Thomas McDowell also noted that when 82% of the budget has legs, you don't have to cut a whole lot to get to that 82%. The other 18% are fixed costs: energy, lights, transportation, legal documents and IEP for special education students.

Councilor Manousos commented that he understood what Thomas McDowell was saying, but explained that as a body, the Council needs to see it to understand it and to discuss and see if this is something, if they are intent on getting to a certain reduction, can they live with those cuts. That's the difficult position the Council has as well and they need to see from the Board of Education's analysis, what items, activities, programs, personnel or savings they might find along

the way so that the Council can catalog it and see the priorities that they have set.

Thomas McDowell commented that this is the first volley and he noted that he was uncomfortable of what he did tonight because he had just finished the presentation at 6:00 and handed it to the Board of Education.

Councilor Manousos asked if the salaries and wages include the \$460,842 stimulus money.

Thomas McDowell responded that it is not included in this budget and noted that if the Council gives the Board of Education anything, it will be in that number. If the Council does not give the Board of Education any money, he is going to ask for that number.

Councilor Manousos asked what the time restrictions are for using that money.

Thomas McDowell responded that it needs to be used by September 30, 2012.

Councilor Montinieri thanked Thomas McDowell for the Board of Education's presentation. He noted that Thomas McDowell referred to several line items and made reference of expenditures that were made, and he wanted to make sure reflected what actually has happened. Several of those obviously were increases that were identified in the proposed budget. Assuming the budget remains within the appropriation, Councilor Montinieri noted that he assumes there are reductions in some of those areas to make up for those expenditures that has to be shown that were already built in. Councilor Montinieri asked if that would be fair to ask, and where would that be.

Thomas McDowell responded that he cannot say where because they did not do a very good job of keeping track of things. He noted that by saying this, in the budget, everything changes above the line. There is the budget appropriation and that's the number. They start developing the budget in October of 2010 and that is going to last through June of 2012. Once they get the appropriation, a lot of the stuff in the budget is a guess; the only thing that doesn't change is the bottom line. All he could say was that things that came out of the budget to pay for other things, came at the expense of something else that was in the budget.

Councilor Montinieri noted that given the climate in town and how it has being approached on the town side, there is going to be movement. And how they get to that movement with some comfort will be a by-product of understanding where some of the shifts are going to occur. He noted that the Council does not have line item appropriation authority over the budget, but they have the authority to say yea or nay and this is the amount. He commented that he wants to feel comfortable that when they review the budget, the more they know and the more discussion there is. He feels there is a need to do that. But there has to be a reciprocal impact on the budget assuming the money did not come from somewhere magical. He also wanted to ask if scenarios are being envisioned on the Board's side at levels beyond where they are today, and has that been proposed and has that discussion occurred, how much time will you need.

Thomas McDowell responded that they have begun that discussion, but the Board adopted the budget on Saturday, March 12 and have been busy since then getting the budget down to 6%. He noted that all they have been doing is meeting on the budget. The Board is going to talk more about the budget after tonight's meeting. He noted this is the third edition of the budget and the third presentation since March 8. He wanted to go on record that whatever the Council needs to make the best decision they can make to benefit the children in our schools, he is ready to be there with whatever information is needed. Whatever the Council needs from the Board, they will give to the Council. They want to be as transparent as possible, any information that is asked for, they just need to know what Council wants.

Councilor Montinieri commented that built within the budget are several initiatives, several new programs, and a wish list that if they had the system where the Superintendent wants it to be in presenting the program to the Council, it would be helpful to understand the priorities within those features. He noted that the Board has made some qualitative choices obviously going from 8.8% to 6%, which included removing several qualitative programs and then levels of technical spending and technology.

Thomas McDowell stated that he would never recommend to the Board to cut an uncertain number of people and then go out and do the Kindergarten Pilot and hire three instructional supervisors. Last year it was necessary to lay off nine teachers. He noted that when he started on March 15, 2010, he signed a letter of transmittal over to the Town for the Budget and he signed nine letters to lay off nine teachers. They noted that the first thing they would do if they got the money back, was to call back those nine teachers, and that's what happened. He commented that he is not going to recommend to the Board that they lay off people and hire different people. He noted that the first priority is not to lose the personnel that they have.

Councilor McAlister referred to slide 9 in which he didn't see the benefit side detailed very well. It noted to improve reading Pre-K through 12. He commented that he would be interested, if this money was given to the Board, what could be expected from the Board and how is that going to be measured. And specifically, will it be measured by school and create a competition between schools, or by grade across the school.

Thomas McDowell responded that there has been discussion about how the seven schools are not sailing as a fleet and that's one of the problems. During discussions with the principals, two things kept coming to the surface: instruction and literacy. This is not in any particular school but across the district. He noted that is where the "improve language arts, writing, reading" came from. With regards to the initiative for Kindergarten, he noted that early childhood initiatives are probably one of the most important things they can do for children. The earlier they get them, the better it is, and it will actually cost less money in the end. This is not about day care but about getting children ready for school.

Councilor McAlister asked if there was some measurement that the Town residents can see what they are getting if the program is funded.

Thomas McDowell responded that somebody will prepare something.

Councilor McAlister also inquired about the public score card. If it cannot be done within the Town can they compete between other towns.

Thomas McDowell commented that our children are as smart as other children. His concern is that he wants the children to be on a level playing field when they leave Wethersfield High School. He noted that Wethersfield has been falling behind.

Councilor McAlister inquired about the process at the end of the year when the Board of Education has money left over, what is the process or policy for returning the money.

Thomas McDowell responded that more trending will be used. He noted that it is always a guess.

Councilor McAlister responded that he is referring to comments made two years ago when there was a surplus of \$1 million and it was encumbered until the following year and some people thought that it should have been returned to the Town but it wasn't.

Thomas McDowell responded that at the end of the year when they are getting towards May, there is an end of year report, there may be line items that are over and a request has to be made to the Board transfer money from one account to another. Presently, he hopes that they are going to end in the black.

Councilor Roberts asked if he would introduce his staff.

Thomas McDowell introduced Emily Daigle, Dean of Students at Wethersfield High School, Andy Komar, Assistant Principal of Wethersfield High School, Jill Krieger, Assistant Principal of Wethersfield High School, Tom Moore, Principal of Wethersfield High School, Steven Cook, Principal of Silas Deane Middle School, Mike Verderame, Assistant Principal at Silas Deane Middle School, Keith Rafaniello, Director of Technology, Margaret Zacchei, Principal of Hanmer School, Elsie Garrey, Principal of Webb Elementary, Mindy Wilki, Principal of Charles Wright, Maresa Harvey, Principal of Highcrest, Elizabeth Harvey, Principal of Emerson Williams, Tim Howes, Director of Finance and Human Resources, Fred Bushey, Director of Maintenance and Operations, Sally Dastoli Director of Curriculum Instruction and Michael Emmett is our Assistant Superintendent responsible for Special Education and Human Services and Instruction and Mike Godart, part-time employee for Security and Residency, and Board members, Penny Stanziale, Gina DeAngelo, Chairman Rodriguez, Martin Walsh, Maria Tougas, John Cascio.

Councilor Roberts wanted to clarify the teacher layoff notices. Traditionally, everyone that is not tenured receive notice, in some years there have been 75 people noticed. To have it presented that if the budget is not funded there is going to be a massive layoff is not the reason of the Statute. The State Statute is protection for the Town also in case there may be people in the first

three years that are not cutting the mustard and before they become tenured the Town has the ability to give them notice. Traditionally this has been done to all so there are no favorites.

Thomas McDowell commented that by State law, they are required to do it. He also noted that it is a morale buster.

Councilor Roberts commented that with previous superintendents, the Board would receive monthly or quarterly status reports on what was spent and what remained in every account, and where at the end of the year there were false numbers - something was traditionally budgeted for less than what was spent. She noted that the Board always budgeted low and more was spent. As budgets have evolved over the years, the numbers were corrected. She noted that he had stated previously that in the past, their reports never show a negative number, but the Board always knew what accounts were in the red.

Thomas McDowell explained that what he meant by the statement was that when they started to build the budget they had little or no backup or trends to go back and review.

Councilor Roberts responded that she didn't understand why that would be if they had the last quarterly financial or last monthly financial from the previous year. In slide 25, Councilor Roberts inquired as to what was meant by Instructional Program Improvement Increase and what was being done for curriculum support.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction Sally Dastoli responded that it relates to programs in grades K-12 in all subject areas, and is spread across all the school buildings.

Councilor Roberts inquired as to the NEASC visit and noted that it happens every ten years.

Thomas McDowell confirmed that it does happen every ten years.

Councilor Roberts asked what expenses are associated with NEASC.

Thomas McDowell responded dues, lodging for four days/three nights and food for the eighteen members of the visiting committee.

Councilor Roberts asked if they are keeping the team leaders or are they doing instructional supervisors.

Thomas McDowell responded that they would prefer to do the instructional supervisors.

Councilor Roberts asked what will happen to the team leaders.

Thomas McDowell responded they will return to the classrooms as teachers.

Councilor Roberts asked how many teachers is that.

Thomas McDowell responded that it is seven.

Councilor Roberts referred to the Supervision and Salaries it reflects combining two administrative positions, is that Tim?

Thomas McDowell responded that it is Tim Howes.

Councilor Roberts asked if that is Human Resources and Financial.

Thomas McDowell responded that is correct.

Councilor Roberts asked where the rent and storage place is located.

Thomas McDowell responded that is on the corner of Jordan Lane and the Silas Deane Highway.

Councilor Roberts asked if there was any other storage space for free with the State.

Thomas McDowell responded not to his knowledge. He explained custodial supplies, furniture and other items are stored there as there is no storage space in the schools. Records are not stored in the storage unit.

Councilor Roberts referred to a possible contradiction on slides 33 and 43. Slide 33 talks about an increase in maintenance supplies and the bottom part states "unfunded mandates for items such as carbon monoxide detectors and grease trap replacement pricing are also included in this line item." And on slide 43 under billing improvement decrease it states "required grease trap replacements, required carbon monoxide detectors" are included in the decrease and asked what the difference was on these amounts.

Fred Bushey responded that four schools under the Maintenance Supply will be done by the in-house staffing and he will purchase the needed equipment for that. As for the high school, it is more complex so he needs a vendor to come in and take care of that.

Councilor Roberts asked if the increase in slide 33 is the high school costs.

Thomas McDowell responded that is correct.

Councilor Roberts asked if it was possible under the Pupil Tuition Increase on Slide 38 to break down the cost for the magnet schools, mandated special education tuition, etc.

Thomas McDowell responded that he would provide a break down.

Councilor Roberts referred to textbooks in slide 40 and asked if any thinking has been done outside the box to look into textbook rentals and whether rentals are done on the high school level and if there would be any cost difference.

Thomas McDowell responded that he would look into that.

Councilor Roberts inquired as to the increase in Conference and Meeting Supplies and asked for a breakdown as to what is included in that.

Thomas McDowell responded that he would take care of that.

Councilor Roberts referred the DRG on slide 50 and asked where this information came from.

Thomas McDowell responded that it is the latest information posted on the State Department of Education's website.

Councilor Roberts asked if referenced 2010-2011.

Thomas McDowell responded that it referenced 2009-2010.

Councilor Roberts referred to the residency issue and asked where the Board was at with this issue.

Thomas McDowell responded that there are two-part time people who work on residency. He noted that this year alone, they have had seven or eight residency hearings, with six turning out in the Town's favor. He also noted that it takes a lot of man hours and surveillance. Generally people will go away without a residency hearing, and they have just completed a very contentious residency hearing that went to the State Board of Education which was dismissed under prejudice. Normally schools are busy with this issue in the beginning of the year but in Wethersfield, because of the proximity to Hartford it's an ongoing issue and they are very vigilant. Usually when the issue has gotten to him, it has come to him from a school principal because a child has said something to a classroom teacher.

Councilor Roberts asked if there are people who just leave.

Thomas McDowell responded that the majority of the students will leave before the hearing because he has changed the letter to say that if the decision is sustained, then by law they can be charged for tuition.

Councilor Roberts asked about the bus transportation costs.

Thomas McDowell responded that it has been discussed at budget workshops and board meetings. He noted that he received an email from Mr. Moore that he observed nine buses arriving at the high school more than half full. It is an ongoing issue as kids get older and start driving to school. This winter there was an issue with parents that regardless of whether the student was a walker or bus rider, parents were driving the students to school. There are issues because parents want to see their child go into the school.

Councilor Roberts replied that the real issue is the mandate states that the Town needs a seat for each student riding the bus and that needs to get changed.

Thomas McDowell responded that the Board of Education cannot change that. He noted that he recently went to a legislative breakfast and this was discussed with the legislators but that was ,along with the kindergarten age increase, so it may have fell on deaf ears.

Councilor Hurley commented that it would help Council to know what the Board could do to get their budget down to a zero increase and to understand what impacts there would be if the budget was zero.

Thomas McDowell noted that he doesn't mind taking the time to work on that, he just doesn't like the subject.

Councilor Drake commented that the Board did a great job putting together the budget. He noted that if someone were to look back on the past ten years, the Town has invested a lot of money in the school system. He noted that although the percentage of the budget has increased, the budged amount for salaries and benefits have stayed the same.

Thomas McDowell responded that as a Superintendent, he would like to have 25% to spend on other things. He noted that teachers meet the needs of kids. When the pie is cut, it's always at the expense of the other number rather than the salaries.

Councilor Drake commented there is so much in teachers' salaries and benefits and 24% inflation over ten years and the budget has been increased 6% in ten years.

Councilor Manousos commented that there has been talk that there is animosity between the Board and the Council and he just wanted to state in front of the Board and the principals of the schools that this is not the case. He stated that the Council has the best interest at heart for the children also, but the Council also has other taxpayer interests in Town as well.

Chairperson Hemmann noted that Thomas McDowell had spoken about indicators of success, and asked what Wethersfield's drop-out rate was.

Thomas McDowell responded that the drop-out rate is 3% at the high school.

Chairperson Hemmann asked if this number has changed.

Thomas McDowell responded that it has been steady and has been going down in the past ten years.

Chairperson Hemmann asked how the attendance for higher education vs. college is.

Thomas McDowell responded that it was 88%.

Chairperson Hemmann thanked Thomas McDowell for his presentation and the detail that was provided.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, commented on the Board of Education's presentation. He also referenced a question which he had asked two or three months ago as to whether the residents on Middletown Avenue had to pay for their sidewalks when the road was repaired and he is still waiting for an answer.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented that he felt a sense of awareness from the Council as to what the Town is being confronted with and that there are no easy solutions. He commented that he thought it was odd that the Board did not retain historical data. George Ruhe also referred to an ongoing question that has been raised at board meetings as to what the legal costs associated with the ethics investigation are and the legal costs for Stacey Hodges that was paid for, or are they being paid for, or are they being buried in this budget. He commented that if it is, he urges that it be removed.

Stephanie McKenna, 66 Harding Street, commented on her support for full day kindergarten.

Kristine McGuire, 66 Country Club Road, commented on the budget that was presented by Timothy McDowell and her support for full day kindergarten.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on his disappointment that the Board of Education members left before the Public Comment section of the agenda. He noted that he had some questions for the Superintendent but he was no longer at the meeting. He asked how many dollars per child this budget represents. He came up with a figure of \$14,500 per child. He noted that the Board of Education reflected a number from 2009-2010 of \$12,968. He noted that if the Town approves the budget as is, it will drive business away. It will also ensure that the graduates of Wethersfield High School, who go on to college, will not come back to Wethersfield to live, as it will not be affordable. He feels that the Board of Education has created the problem with money in the Town. He also questioned where in the budget the \$672,000 that is owed to the State is shown.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Deputy Mayor Console reported for the Safety Committee met to discuss the contract with the Wethersfield Ambulance Association.

Councilor Kotkin reported for the Insurance Committee and noted that CIRMA is going to provide dividend checks back to the members in July of this year for a total amount of \$47,165. He commented that in the Board of Education's budget, there was an increase of 6.6% in workers compensation. In the Safety Committee meeting there was a discussion of a potential of flat to down .7% in the workers' compensation bill so the Committee wasn't sure if there was an

allocation issue that is being reflected here or if the Board doesn't have the latest numbers and asked Jeff Bridges if he knew the answer.

Jeff Bridges noted that he is unaware of what the issue is.

Councilor Roberts reported for the Wethersfield Senior Citizens Advisory Committee who will be presenting their annual seminar on Tuesday, April 26 at 1:30 p.m. at the Pitkin Center and is entitled "Being a Smart Safe Consumer" and the keynote speaker is Attorney General George Jepsen. She noted that there will also be a truck available in the parking lot from 3:00 to 5:00 for anyone who has material to shred. For reservations, contact Donna Mattison at 860-721-2979.

Councilor Manousos reported that the Budget & Finance work sessions are completed and the Town Manager is binding the proposed budget for a presentation to the Town Council by the first Monday in April. He reported that EDIC met and bids came back for the Wayfinding Signage. Installation will start late June or July and should be completed by the end of August. He also reported that on Sunday, June 5, Comstock Ferre is having their 200th Anniversary Party, the Keane Foundation is having their 10th 5K race, and the Taste of Wethersfield is April 9.

Councilor Montinieri reported that he had a meeting with the Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities and the focus was the transportation agreement that is coming up for renewal. They met with Social Services and that the contract bids are in. There is a large anticipation from residents in Town who have a range of disabilities who utilize the transportation services from Dial-A-Ride.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Hurley commented on a subject that Robert Young brought up during Public Comment regarding the cost to educate a child in Wethersfield. He noted that Robert Young gave a figure of \$14,500 and Councilor Hurley stated that he calculated a figure of \$13,866.

Deputy Mayor Console mentioned the passing of Frank Morris recently and noted that Frank Morris was an icon in the Town of Wethersfield. He also reported that he visited Mr. Sparkle Car Wash and Lucky Lou's.

Councilor Montinieri commented on the Board of Education's budget and noted that the Town is facing a difficult final stretch on the budget process. There was been progress in several of the initiatives. He urged the public to come out and provide responses to the budget. He felt there was a lot more that needed to be done with the budget.

Chairperson Hemmann reported that the Town Manager will be presenting his budget to the Town Council on April 4. There will be a Budget Hearing on April 18 at 7:00 p.m. at Council Chambers. She noted that they will be taking the budget on the road around the community to outreach to residents in a different format.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges reported for the Central Connecticut Solid Waste Authority. The Town is in the process of selecting a new solid waste disposal solution, which is not a collection solution. It has been recommended to meet with the Public Works Committee to review the options before a final decision is made. He also reported that due to the weather and the oxygen levels at the Old Reservoir if there is fish gill, which is a natural occurrence. He noted that there is nothing in the water that is causing this problem; it is just the oxygen levels.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor Montinieri moved **“TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF HEIDI LANE, FROM THE ETHICS BOARD,”** seconded by Councilor Drake.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Montinieri moved **“TO APPOINT SHANELLE DATTILO, 84 ROUND HILL ROAD, AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE INLAND WETLANDS FOR THE TERM 03-21-2011 TO 06-30-2013; TO APPOINT PAULA IZARD, 89 CIDER BROOK DRIVE, TO THE ETHICS BOARD, FOR THE TERM 03-21-2011 TO 06-30-2013,”** seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO APPOINT PETER V. MOZZICATO, 23 WELLS FARM DRIVE, AS AN ALTERNATE TO THE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD, FOR THE TERM 3-21-2011 THROUGH 6-30-2012 AND TO APPOINT ROBERT COBB, 99 MEADOW VIEW, TO REPLACE FRANK MORRIS ON THE INLAND WETLANDS AND WATER COMMISSION, FOR THE TERM 7-1-2010 THROUGH 6-30-2011,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE SALE OF A 1998 FORD EXPEDITION, A STUMP GRINDER AND A WOOD CHIPPER”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

Jeff Bridges reported in accordance with Town Code §37-3, the Town Council may, on the Town Manager's recommendation, authorize the sale of Town personal property by auction. Town staff is requesting permission to sell a 1998 Ford Expedition (the former DARE Vehicle), a stump grinder and a non-functioning wood chipper.

Based on the condition of the vehicles and equipment, it is not anticipated that the Town will make much money from the sale.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the stump grinder was going to be replaced.

Jeff Bridges responded that the stump grinder was not going to be replaced.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the Town is going to either borrow a stump grinder from another town or rent a stump grinder when needed.

Jeff Bridges responded that this is what will be done.

Deputy Mayor Console inquired as to whether, when a stump grinder is needed, does the Town need to go out to bid for it.

Mike Turner responded that it goes through CRCOG.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

BIDS

Councilor Drake moved **“TO AWARD THE BID FOR CUSTODIAL SERVICES FOR TOWN HALL, THE LIBRARY , POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND THE TOWN GARAGE TO PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTAL IN THE AMOUNT OF \$76,710,”** seconded by Councilor Montinieri.

Jeff Bridges reported Town staff solicited bids for custodial services for Town Hall, the Library, the Police Headquarters, and the Town Garage. Thirteen vendors responded with bids ranging in cost from \$65,000 to \$116,000. Public Works Director Michael Turner convened a committee to review the bids and determine the lowest responsible bidder. The attached memorandum from Mr. Turner details the extensive process used to determine the recommended vendor. Staff is recommending that award be made to Performance Environmental in the amount of \$76,710. The lowest bidders were deemed not responsible due to the number of hours bid, the distance from Wethersfield or the result of reference checks. Mr. Turner will be at the meeting to answer questions.

Chairperson Hemmann asked Mike Turner to go through the process of selecting the company.

Mike Turner reported that they first tightened up the scope of work. There are four different buildings with four different styles of cleaning and requirements. Thirteen bids were received, with some bids coming from out of state. A committee was formed from a representation of the Library, Town Garage, Police Department and Town Hall and the bids were reviewed and narrowed the bids down to three bidders. Reference checks were done by the Police Department

and the referral has been sent back to the Town Council to rehire the current firm, Performance Environmental.

Councilor Kotkin asked what the terms were for the new contract and when it starts.

Mike Turner responded that the contract starts July 1 and the term is for one year with two renewable one year extensions. He noted that each department has used these numbers in their own budget.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO AUTHORIZE A CHANGE ORDER TO THE CONTRACT WITH GENERAL PAVING IN THE AMOUNT OF \$87,546 FOR WORK ON THE MIDDLETOWN AVENUE DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS AND RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT,”** seconded by Councilor Montinieri.

Jeff Bridges reported on August 16, 2010, Town Council awarded a bid to General Paving for the reconstruction of Middletown Avenue between Summerfield Road and Broad Street. The project funding is through the Local Capital Improvement Program (LOCIP) from the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management. The initial project estimate was for \$375,000. General Paving submitted a bid of \$269,835. Public Works Director Michael Turner is requesting a change order for the project to align the final contract amount with the work performed. The Change Order final adjustment is for \$87,546. The attached memorandum and documentation from Public Works Director Michael Turner provides more information about the change order.

Deputy Mayor Console asked to clarify that the initial bid was \$269,835 and then additional work was requested which required an adjustment to the final payment

Mike Turner responded that the final figure represents the final quantity of work that was completed in the field.

Deputy Mayor Console asked whether this work should have been reflected in the original bid.

Mike Turner responded that most of the changes reflect additional driveway and sidewalk aprons that were adjusted in the field and additional police time for traffic control. The bid reflects what quantity is included in the bid for comparison of the bids. This reflects the actual work completed in the field with necessary field adjustments.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the company should have known this information when the submitted the bid.

Mike Turner responded that the companies bid based on the Town's estimated quantities for comparing the bids. It's the Town's best guesstimate at the time when the design is set.

Mike Turner responded that everyone bids on the quantities that were in the bid form with these adjustments. The other vendors' bids were also double checked and this would not change the order of bids.

Councilor Drake asked if the drawing would have reflected the changes more closely.

Mike Turner responded that sometimes there may be things that they do not have control over.

Councilor Montinieri asked how the additional work is verified and how the material is measured.

Mike Turner responded that any time a contractor submits an invoice, his department either has tickets to back up how much tonnage of asphalt was placed or someone from his department is physically at the work site measuring the material. Mike Turner commented that this project was used with LOCIP money and no Town money was used.

Councilor Hurley asked if there is an overrun on a project, is the Town Manager consulted.

Mike Turner responded that the Town Manager is consulted.

Jeff Bridges commented that when an old road is reconstructed, it is not uncommon to run into problems.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if the Morrison Avenue project could run into an increase in contractual issue costs that were raised with the Middletown Avenue project.

Mike Turner responded that a cost contingency is built into the cost estimates. With the Morrison Avenue project, the project entails ripping out all of the sidewalks and adjusting them to match what is there. He doesn't expect quantities to be overrun because they will be out there with them to adjust elevations if needed. He noted that they do propose bidding as a unit price job similarly to this project, but he doesn't feel there is the same variability in this project as was in the Middletown Avenue project.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **"TO AUTHORIZE THE ADDITIONAL WORK BY COLOSSALE CONCRETE ON THE SILAS DEANE STREETScape PROJECT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$240,000"** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Jeff Bridges and Mike Turner reported that for several years the Town has been working on a streetscape project for the Silas Deane Highway side of the Town Hall. We have received numerous grants to conduct sequential phases of work based upon an original project cost and competitively bid contract of \$1,339,500 with Colossale Concrete. With an additional STEAP

grant of \$250,000 staff is asking to undertake the phase 2 work for \$240,000 as an add back / change order to the current contractor. A memo from Town Engineer Mike Turner is attached with greater details on the history of the program and the current request. The scope of work described in Mr. Turner's memo indicates the work that will be accomplished with the latest project. The items referenced by the contractor in the email of March 2, 2010 are deducts from the original scope of work and the remaining work from the original project scope would be worth \$240,000.

Councilor Drake commented that Mike Turner indicated that there will be additional streetscape money available but felt it was a lot of money spent that hasn't benefited a lot of people in the community. He asked if any of this money can be used for the entrance to Town Hall.

Mike Turner replied that it is specially geared to the Streetscape project.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if this matter could be tabled until this issue could be looked into further.

Chairperson Hemmann commented that the Town has already received and accepted this grant. The second grant has not been received yet so we could ask the question as to whether it can be used for another project.

Councilor Kotkin asked if this project was awarded under a 2007 bid.

Mike Turner responded that this was correct. The unit prices are the prices from 2007 and prices have increased roughly 9% to 10%.

Councilor Kotkin asked if the Town had the ability to rebid the project.

Mike Turner responded that the Town could have the project go out to bid again, but the Town is using 2007 unit prices and the work identified in this particular phase of the project have increased. He stated is feels comfortable that the Town is getting a good deal and he is pleased with the work done by this contractor.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

MINUTES

Councilor Kotkin moved **"TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 7, 2011"** seconded by Deputy Mayor Console. .

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Montinieri abstained. The motion passed 8-0-1.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrision Avenue, commented on the Board of Education's budget presentation.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented on the passing of Frank Morris. He asked for clarification on the unemployment compensation portion of the budget and asked if it was correct that if five positions were eliminated, another person would need to be added.

Bob Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on page 10 of the Board of Education budget and specifically on the minimum requirement budget. He commented also that the Board of Education has been over assessing the citizens of Wethersfield for several years now. Bob Young also spoke on the Wethersfield Housing Authority and asked what is done with the money that is received from the State. In 2008-2009, the Town received \$263,000 "in payment in lieu of" from the controllers' office and \$16,790 the Economical Development ("ECD") for payment in lieu of taxes. He inquired as to why the Town is getting PILOT money from the State.

Jeff Bridges responded that towns receive PILOT money for state owned buildings, for the Housing Authority and for the Elderly and Disabled Housing. He noted that before he makes any assumptions, the numbers should be tracked from the State. He also commented on the Housing Authority and noted that their sewer charges are forgiven and children living in the Housing Authority attend Wethersfield Schools and the Housing Authority does not pay any taxes.

George Wallace, 22 Chesterfield Road, read an article regarding a Plainville school that is having their boiler replaced for free and summarized the newspaper article about how it was done.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:15 p.m., Councilor Kotkin moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Deputy Mayor Console.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by vote of Council
April 4, 2011